

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Modifications to Federally Permitted For-Hire Vessels Reporting Requirements for Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources**

**April 2017**

#### **What would the new reporting requirements be?**

- The For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment would modify data reporting requirements for federally permitted for-hire vessels (charter vessels and headboats) in the Gulf of Mexico to declare (hail-out) the type of trip (for-hire or other) prior to departing for any trip, and electronically submit trip-level reports prior to off-loading fish at the end of each fishing trip. Previously, electronic reports were submitted by headboats on a weekly basis and charter vessels were only required to report if selected by NOAA Fisheries.
- Prior to departing for any trip, the owner or operator of a vessel issued a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish or Gulf CMP is required to declare (hail out) the type of trip (e.g., for-hire or other trip). When departing on a for-hire trip they must include the expected return time and landing location.
- Reports would include information about catch and effort during the trip.
- The amendment would also require that federally permitted for-hire vessels possess a global positioning system (GPS) attached to the vessel that is capable, at a minimum, of archiving GPS locations. This requirement would not preclude the use of GPS devices that provide real-time location data or vessel monitoring systems.

#### **Why are the new requirements necessary?**

- To allow better monitoring of recreational annual catch limits to more efficiently manage recreational fishing seasons.
- The trip-level for-hire reporting would be implemented in this amendment to help improve population assessments by providing a more accurate record of for-hire vessel landings and data associated with the fishing locations.
- The new system would also provide a history of landings by vessel, which could be needed if the Council develops new management strategies for the for-hire industry in the future.

#### **Who would be required to submit fishing records electronically?**

- For-hire vessels that have federal Gulf of Mexico for-hire permit (reef fish or coastal migratory pelagic) would be required to submit trip-level electronic reports regardless of where they are fishing, including other regions and state waters.
- Proposed regulations for federal for-hire vessels in the South Atlantic indicate that if a vessel has both a South Atlantic and a Gulf of Mexico for-hire permit, the vessel would be required to report according to Gulf of Mexico requirements, even when fishing in the South Atlantic, to reduce duplicate reporting and any ambiguity on what report is required.

**Is a report required if I don't go fishing?**

- If no fishing activity occurred, an electronic report stating so must be submitted.
- It is anticipated that reports of no fishing activity could be submitted up to a month ahead of time.

**What if I don't submit fishing records on time?**

- For-hire owners and operators who are delinquent in submitting their reports are prohibited from continuing to harvest and possess Gulf of Mexico reef fish or coastal migratory pelagic fish until they have submitted all required reports.
- Permits would not be renewed if the vessel is delinquent in reporting.
- Reporting violations would be subject to NOAA Policy for Assessment of Penalties and Permit Sanctions.

[http://www.gc.noaa.gov/documents/Penalty%20Policy\\_FINAL\\_07012014\\_combo.pdf](http://www.gc.noaa.gov/documents/Penalty%20Policy_FINAL_07012014_combo.pdf).

**What type of GPS device would be required?**

- The GPS unit would require archiving location information and is permanently affixed to the vessel.
- Currently there is a list of NOAA Fisheries Type-Approved VMS Units. These units would be acceptable units and any new systems would need to be evaluated and approved for the program [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/about/our\\_programs/vessel\\_monitoring.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/about/our_programs/vessel_monitoring.html).
- The proposed and final rules provide a list of approved systems.
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**When would the requirements be effective?**

- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council approved the amendment and has submitted it to NOAA Fisheries for approval by the Secretary of Commerce.
- NOAA Fisheries is developing the new for-hire electronic reporting system
- NOAA Fisheries is anticipating the earliest the system would be ready sometime in 2018 or 2019.

**Where can I find more information about the amendment?**

- The For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/For-Hire\\_Electronic\\_Reporting/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/For-Hire_Electronic_Reporting/index.html), or the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Web site: <http://www.gulfcouncil.org/>.
- Any questions regarding reporting requirements should be directed to the Southeast Regional Office, Saint Petersburg, Florida @ 727-824-5305.

**How can I provide comments?**

- Once the proposed rule is posted to the *Federal Register*, the comment period will be open to the public for 30 days.
- NOAA Fisheries will be sending a Fishery Bulletin announcing the publishing of the rule.
- You can sign-up to receive Fishery Bulletins at this link: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishery\\_bulletins/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishery_bulletins/index.html)